

SHREWSBURY YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY FACT SHEET

Rationale

The Shrewsbury Youth Risk Behavior Survey is an anonymous and confidential questionnaire given to students in grade 6, 8, 9 and 11, at the end of their health instruction. The instrument itself is based on both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the MA Department of Education YRBS survey. The survey includes 65 questions for grades 6 and 8 and 119 questions for grades 9 and 11. The questions ask about tobacco use; alcohol and other drug use; sexual behavior that might lead to unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease; dietary behavior; physical activity; and behaviors associated with intentional or unintentional injury.

Why is the survey being done?

The primary purpose for administering this instrument is to measure health-risk behaviors practiced by our students. The survey results will also be used to evaluate the appropriateness of our curriculum, create school health programs to help reduce risky behaviors and use the data for comparison with the State Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and other national tools. We also use the information as a component of our needs assessment and to create measurable objectives for the Title IV-Safe and Drug Free School Grant.

Are sensitive questions asked?

Some questions are sensitive but this is not a “Sex Survey”. To help solve problems among our youth, we must first recognize our need and then understand the behaviors. Sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS, and unintended pregnancy are consequences we teach to prevent. Sexual activity and injecting illegal drugs increases the risks of disease transmission or life long social and economic disadvantages. The middle school survey contains 2 questions out of 70 and the high school survey contains 14 questions out of 119, that ask about sexual activity. In addition, questions are asked related to other sensitive topics including self harm-cutting, thoughts of suicide, drug experimentation and addiction.

Will students’ names be used or linked to the survey?

The survey is anonymous. It has been designed to protect your child’s privacy. When students finish the survey, they place the survey in an envelope, which is turned into the Health Director for scanning and tabulation at the summer break.

Who supports this survey?

The survey gathers information about behaviors associated with the leading causes of illness, injury and death among young people and adults and is supported by many state and national organizations. Similar versions are also implemented across the state of MA (DOE) and the country (CDC). The Town Wide Health Advisory Council reviews the questions regularly and recommends changes as necessary to best meet the needs within our community. The Council has endorsed and advised yearly administration in Shrewsbury to monitor how the risk behaviors of students increase, decrease, or remain the same over time. Valid results depend on high participation rates among students but participation is voluntary and parents are notified on the course syllabus and allowed the opportunity to exempt their child from participating. Copies of the survey will be posted on the School Department web page for parent preview.

What data do we have to support this practice?

The percentages of self reported behaviors are reviewed each fall by the Health Education Department and modifications to the instruction are adopted to meet the needs identified in the responses. In most of the risk behavior categories our students’ responses indicate better decisions and healthier behaviors in comparison to the MA YRBS and the national data. The implementation of this survey has been conducted since 1994 and has provided us with consistent trends as well as alerting us to new risk behaviors that become popular. Yearly data review has led to successfully changing our teaching and services, resulting in reduced risk behaviors including steroid use and fighting. Because we have longitudinal data and high student response rates, the results can be generalized as an accurate representation of our community.

Town Wide Health Advisory Council:

Judith Evans	Assistant Superintendent	Deborah Peeples	School Committee
Patricia Degon	Director of Health/PE/FCS	Nancy Allen	Public Health Dept.
Steven Dupuis	Director of Pupil Services	Wayne Sampson	Police Chief
Jayne Wilkin	Principal	Jeffrey Chin	Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services
Judith DeFalco	Lead Nurse	Patrick White	St. John’s HS

Alison McDonald Health Teacher
Catherine Burgholzer Health Teacher

Kathy Deknis
Samantha Chadwick

St. Mary's School Nurse
Student

